

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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### CONYERS BLASTS ASHCROFT'S FURTHER EXPANSION OF FBI SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITY

Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, issued the following statement in response to the Justice Department's decision to allow monitoring of Internet sites and religious institutions without evidence of criminal activity:

"The Administration's continued defiance of constitutional safeguards seems to have no end in sight. This decision decimates the Fourth Amendment. The Justice Department is intent on another power grab when it has become clear that a lack of competence - not law enforcement authorities - prevented the Administration from connecting the dots before September 11. I call on the Bush Administration to immediately halt any efforts to unilaterally expand surveillance authority and to consult Congress before implementing further intrusions on our civil liberties.

Any government effort to institutionalize the same powers that allowed the FBI to wrongfully spy on the activities of civil rights organizations and disclose information on the private affairs of Martin Luther King, Jr. would constitute an embarrassing step backwards for civil liberties in this country.

Threatening the private practice of religion constitutes a war on freedom, not a war on terror. I hope it is clear to all that taking it upon himself to institute new rules to wiretap religious organizations, including places of worship, the Attorney General will do little to help us battle terrorism. Instead, it will simply further alienate the American Muslim community, a crucial ally in our efforts."

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